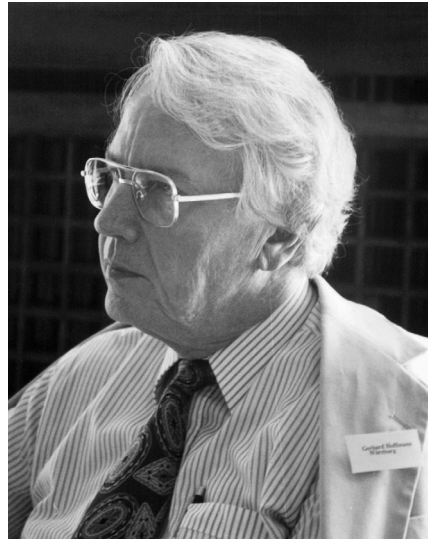


In Memoriam: Prof. Dr. Gerhard Hoffmann (1931-2018)

On 9 March 2018, Professor Dr. Gerhard Hoffmann died in Würzburg where he had held the first American Studies professorship from 1971 to 1999. In the three decades of his wide-ranging activities in the School of Philosophy at the Julius-Maximilian Universität, he created an unusually strong and vibrant American Studies program and established his chair as one of most prominent ones in Germany, recognized internationally. The two conferences which he organized for the German Association for American Studies in Würzburg, on “The Politics and Culture in Andrew Jackson’s America” in 1981 and on “The South” in 1996, had a great impact on the interdisciplinary field of American Studies. His academic career and his life are intimately connected with the evolution and



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the life of the German Association for American Studies. As a student in Erlangen, Freiburg, and Göttingen, he already encompassed the wide scope of literature, writing a dissertation on Shakespeare and a habilitation on the English and American novel. As an academic and cultural mediator, he progressively mastered all areas of the field of American Studies at the Universities of Regensburg and Würzburg in Germany and at many institutions in the United States. When he came to Würzburg in 1971, he had to start from scratch: the library contained only a few shelves with books by American writers. In no time Hoffmann put Würzburg on the map of important American Studies centers in Germany. His innovative and open form of teaching attracted great numbers of students and stimulated them to pursue degrees in American literature and culture. Famous were his research seminars, which started at 8 p. m. and usually carried on till about 11, inevitably ending up in the wine parlor of the famous baroque Residence.

We as students also welcomed and appreciated Gerhard Hoffmann’s inexhaustible travel spirit that led to a number of coveted exchange programs with the State University of New York at Albany, Oneonta, Oswego and Stony Brook, the University of New Mexico at Albuquerque, and the University of Texas at Austin. Both his research based on experimental teaching and the academic exchanges were the concrete manifestations of his restless mind. As assistants, we were constantly invited to accompany him on his mental journeys through all fields of literature, culture, theory, the arts and beyond. Untiringly in his intellectual pursuits, he was constantly engaged in reading and writing as well as his interests in the arts by visiting museums all over the world. These activities fascinated him, and he knew how to fascinate other people and how to galvanize them for his innovative projects.

One of the popular academic interests in the 1970s was postmodernism. Together with Ihab Hassan, the Egyptian-born critic and universally acclaimed expert from the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, he turned Würzburg into a stronghold of postmodernism. This avant-gardist spirit, coupled with the urge for comprehensiveness, informed all his endeavors. His published articles remain rich sources of information and erudition and easily amount to book-length studies. The published books were always too short to contain all his ideas. Hence they reached more than 800 pages, or come in several volumes, like his magisterial study on the English and American novel: *Raum, Situation, erzählte Wirklichkeit: Poetologische und historische Studien zum englischen und amerikanischen Roman* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1978), or the more recent study *From Modernism to Postmodernism: Concepts and Strategies of Postmodern American Fiction* (Amsterdam: Edition Rodopi, 2005), and the three-volume edited work on *Der zeitgenössische amerikanische Roman* (München: Fink Verlag, 1988). Several conferences on postmodernism led to more publications, among them the bestseller in our monograph series *Emotion in Postmodernism* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 1997). Books with valuable study material for students on the American short story or the American drama appeared collaterally. Shortly before his death, he completed a manuscript on categories of presentation in contemporary fictions, a topic which had fascinated him all his professional life. This summation of his research will appear in 2019 as *The Aesthetic Networks of Negation and Affirmation: Satire and Humor, the Tragic and the Absurd, the Grotesque and the Monstrous, the Transformations and Attenuations by Play, Irony, Parody, the Comic Mode and Their Interrelations* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter).

In the 1970s and 1980s Gerhard Hoffmann engaged fully in the advancement of the German Association for American Studies (GAAS) with the same intensity and intellectual rigor that qualified his research. The fortunate cooperation of energetic and experienced scholars and the rapid evolution of a vibrant association led to the triumvirate of Hans Bungert, Gerhard Hoffmann, and Günter Moltmann, who held the offices of president, vice president, and executive director between 1972-1981, with Gerhard Hoffmann serving as executive director from 1972-78 and as president from 1978-81. Hoffmann actively sought contacts to international groups and actually managed to establish the first vital relationship with the American Studies Association (ASA) at its convention in San Antonio, Texas, in 1975. In ASA president William H. Goetzmann, he encountered the Parkman Prize- and Pulitzer Prize-winning cultural historian with whom he cooperated in creating student and faculty exchanges and pursued joint projects. Hoffmann also used his time as president to assemble and recruit American Studies material for education and established several American Studies centers at German universities.

This highly active period was also the moment when Gerhard Hoffmann started to turn his lifelong passion as an art collector into an academic endeavor. During his stays in the American Southwest, he went to the Pueblos and met with Native American artists, and eventually supplanted his collection of German expressionists with Native American Art. Unabashed by many bureaucratic hassles, he single-handedly organized a major exhibition of Native American Art for Ger-

man museums in 1985, accompanied by the magisterial publication *Indianische Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert: Malerei, Keramik und Kachinafiguren indianischer Künstler in den USA* (München: Prestel, 1985), which was followed by *Zeitgenössische Kunst der Indianer und Eskimos in Kanada: Im Schatten der Sonne* (Stuttgart: Cantz, 1988). This form of teaching outside of the classroom to introduce a new field to a general audience added a new feature to the interdisciplinary concept of American Studies.

After his GAAS presidency, Gerhard Hoffmann took over the editorship of the journal *Amerikastudien / American Studies* in 1982. As general editor until 1990, Hoffmann changed the journal from a biannual into a quarterly volume, introduced thematic issues and moved the journal from Metzler Verlag in Stuttgart to Fink Verlag in Munich where each of the four issues came in a different color: spring – orange, summer – yellow, fall – green, winter – blue. Hoffmann brought to this multi-colored job his immense scholarly and managerial qualities, as well as his experience as one of the editors of the monograph series of the GAAS, which he had taken over in 1974 together with Hans Galinsky and Günter Moltmann. His co-editorship of the book series lasted until 2014, making it forty years of editorship for our association.

At the third conference of the GAAS in Würzburg, organized by Prof. Dr. Catrin Gersdorf in 2014, the German Association for American Studies recognized the long-time service and many remarkable achievements of its president, treasurer, editor along with his excellent record of an American Studies scholar and awarded Gerhard Hoffmann an honorary membership. His many students, disciples, colleagues, and friends express their gratitude to him for promoting their careers and will preserve his memory for future generations of the German Association for American Studies.

Alfred Hornung, Obama Institute, Johannes Gutenberg-University, Mainz

